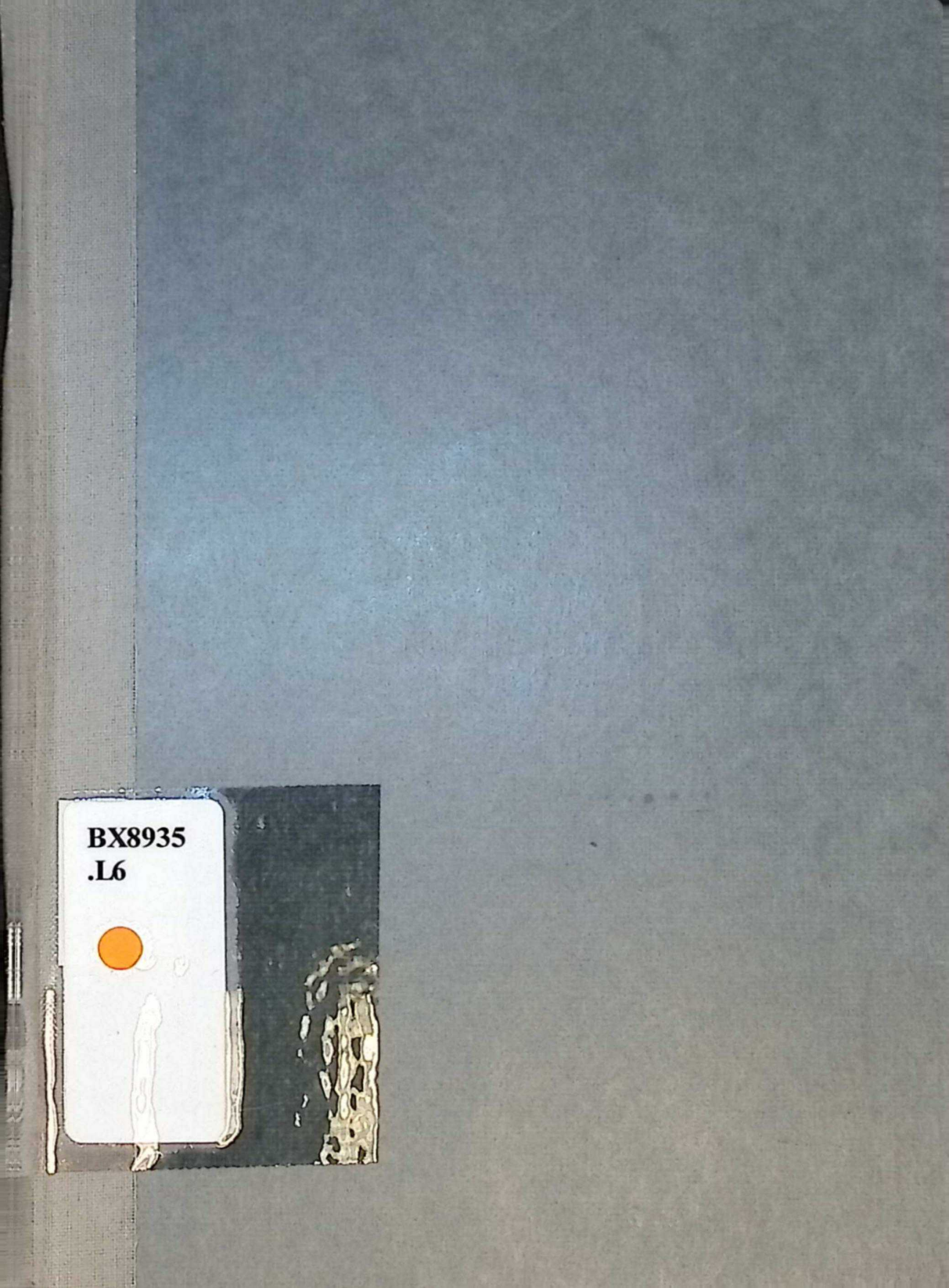
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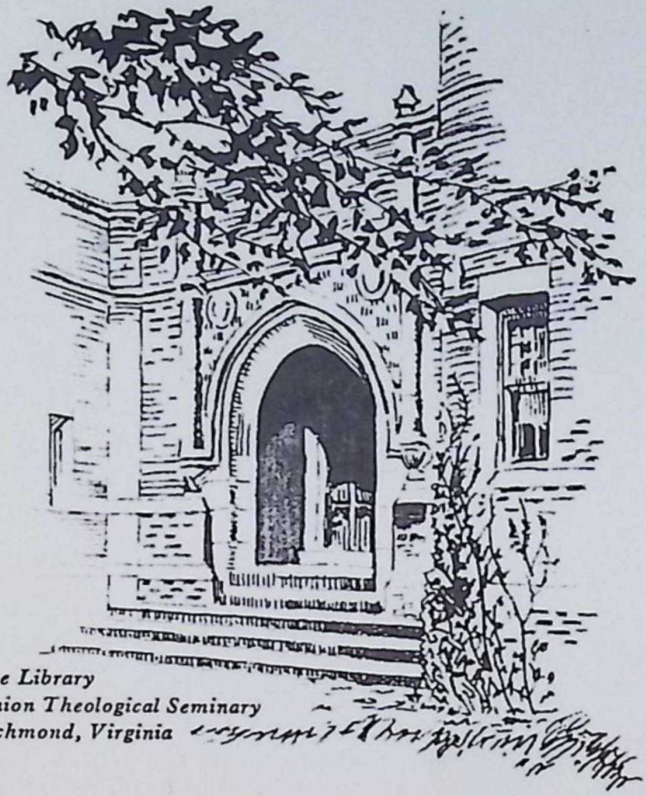

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FIFTY YEARS

The Reunion of the Old and New School Presbyterian Churches 1870-1920

FREDERICK WILLIAM LOETSCHER
PH.D., D.D., LL.D.

PHILADELPHIA
THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
AND SABBATH SCHOOL WORK
1920

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Published on the occasion of the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Reunion at the meeting of the One Hundred and Thirty-second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May, 1920.

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THE REUNION OF THE OLD AND NEW SCHOOL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES 1870-1920

I

THE SEPARATION

In the history of American Christianity the period from about 1830 to 1840 was marked by an unusual amount of agitation and strife. In nearly all of the churches there was a great deal of what an old Puritan called "the carnality of religious contention." Scarcely one of the larger denominations was free from schismatic tendencies. It was in this epoch that the so-called Old and New Schools in the Presbyterian Church arose, resulting in the memorable division of the year 1837.

The Church had made great progress in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but the growth was not altogether wholesome. This was due in large part to the operation of the Plan of Union adopted in 1801 by the General Assembly of our Church and the General Association of Connecticut, "with a view to prevent alienation and promote union and harmony, in those new settlements"—chiefly in western New York and Ohio—which were "composed of inhabitants from those bodies." The scheme undoubtedly promoted aggressive evangelism, and the Presbyterians had no reason for complaint so far as their share of

the additions to the church rolls was concerned; for the accessions during the years 1830 to 1834 increased their communicant membership by more than fifty per cent.

But friction arose along various lines of theological and ecclesiastical activity. The Old School side was zealous to maintain the doctrinal traditions of the Church in their purity and integrity, and abhorred the very idea of trying to "improve" the Calvinism of the standards; while among the New School party there were some—the number kept increasing rapidly for some years after 1830—who sought to interpret the Confession of Faith in the light of the peculiarities of the New England theology. But the more important differences were those pertaining to the polity of the Church and the methods of conducting its organized activities. The New School favored coöperation with the voluntary societies, such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Education Society, and the American Home Missionary Society, in the management of which Presbyterian ministers and laymen were ably represented; the Old School maintained that the Church should conduct her benevolent work both at home and abroad by means of her own Boards and agencies, two of which, those of Domestic Missions and Education, the General Assembly had established in the second decade of the nineteenth century, while in 1832 the Synod of Pittsburgh had erected the For-

eign Missionary Society with the purpose of making it national in aim and influence. Another cause for conflicting opinions centered in the question of the propriety of permitting "committeemen" from Plan of Union churches to sit and vote in the courts of the Church. After repeated protests made against this custom by increasing Old School minorities, the Assembly of 1832 decided the matter in the negative, and the next year it also disclaimed the view of the Western Reserve Synod that the constitution did not make the eldership essential to the existence of the Church. Moreover, the Old School had good reason for objecting to the practice in some presbyteries of receiving ministers from Congregational churches without requiring them to assent to the standards of the Church, and of ordaining licentiates *sine titulo* for service in other presbyteries "before they could know what Presbyterianism was." Again, the Old School complained of the extravagances and disorders connected with the "New Measures" introduced into the work of evangelism in New York and Ohio by C. G. Finney and his more eccentric imitators.

By the year 1835 the situation had become critical. Many of the Old School leaders had become convinced that a division of the Church was the only solution of the difficulties. The General Assembly of 1835, though unwilling to abrogate the Plan of Union and to discontinue the support of the voluntary societies, appointed a committee to consider the propriety of having

the Assembly adopt as its own agency the Western Foreign Missionary Society. The Assembly of 1836, with its New School majority, declined to make the transfer as recommended by the committee. The offense which this decision gave to the other side was greatly increased by the fact that this same Assembly sustained the appeal and protest of Rev. Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia, charged with teaching doctrines contrary to the standards, and thus vindicated him as completely as the Assembly of 1831 had done in settling the issue that arose out of the opposition to his installation the year before, as pastor of the First Church of that city. Thereupon the Old School leaders, having held a convention a few days before the meeting of the Assembly of 1837 to determine their method of procedure in that body, and finding that they had a majority of the commissioners on their side, sought to effect a peaceful division of the Church. When this proved impracticable, the Assembly abrogated the Plan of Union as being unconstitutional, and then passed a resolution that " the Synod of the Western Reserve is hereby declared to be no longer a part of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." That same day, June 1, it adopted a recommendation that the American Home Mission and American Education societies " cease to operate within any of our churches." A few days later, the Synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee were likewise " declared to be out of the ecclesiastical connection of the Presby-

terian Church," and the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia was dissolved and its members directed to seek connection with some other body. Among the other important acts of this Assembly was the adoption of a constitution for its new Board of Foreign Missions and the appointment of its first members.

When the Assembly of 1838 met in the Seventh Church of Philadelphia, the commissioners of the New School, having protested in vain against the exclusion of the delegates from the four exscinded synods, proceeded, in accordance with legal counsel previously taken, to organize their own Assembly in the presence of the whole body, and then repaired to the First Church for their meeting. The question in regard to the property of the Church was taken to the civil courts. The first decision favored the New School, but the case on appeal was settled in favor of the Old School.

II

EVENTS LEADING TO THE REUNION

The Old School, embracing about five ninths of the ministry and membership of the Church, made the more rapid progress. Its ecclesiastical machinery was in better working order; its constituency was more uniform; it developed an earnest missionary spirit and organized various Boards for the more efficient conduct of its benevolent activities: Publication (1838), Church Erection (1844), Ministerial Relief (1855), and Freedmen (1865). With respect to the question of slavery, which was rapidly becoming the dominant moral and political issue in the nation, it was inclined, out of deference to its large southern constituency, to say as little as possible, and to regard the institution as one whose unquestioned evils it was the task of the state rather than of the Church to remedy.

The New School was marked from an early date by an increase of Presbyterian feeling, and it was this, more than anything else, that was needed to make a reunion possible. For the doctrinal differences, however grave they had appeared in the stormy years before 1837, came to be viewed in a new and better light. Much to the surprise of some of its opponents, the New School Church by no means fulfilled the dire forebodings of some of its foes, that in its descent from bad to worse it would not stop short of downright Socinianism. On the contrary, it faithfully stood

by the Confession as reflected in the propositions of the Auburn Declaration (1837), it became more independent of the New England influences, and it never throughout its separate existence suffered from any serious theological controversy. But it was in the realm of ecclesiastical method that the New School erelong found it both necessary and desirable to pattern its policies after those of its more efficient and successful rival. History itself gave the needed object lessons. Thus, as early as 1849, the New School gave up the idea of holding a triennial, instead of an annual, General Assembly. In 1852 the Albany Congregational Convention repudiated the Plan of Union, and this act, in view of the increasing laxity of the Congregationalists alike in doctrine and in polity, proved a great blessing to their former allies in ecclesiastical enterprise, for it threw them upon their own resources and led them to establish in quick succession a number of permanent committees corresponding to the Boards of the Old School Assemblies: one on Publication (1852), another on Church Extension (1853), and a third on Ministerial Education (1854). This policy amply justified itself, especially in view of the well-founded criticisms to which the arbitrary and often unfair operations of the American Missionary and Education societies had given rise.

In the course of time, the New School branch developed a more vigorous antislavery policy than did its rival. In 1850 it declared slaveholding by any of its

members a matter of Church discipline except in special circumstances. As a consequence of these increasingly stringent deliverances, the southern part of the New School, numbering six synods, with some 15,000 communicants, voluntarily withdrew, and in April, 1858, organized the "United Synod of the Presbyterian Church."

The year 1861 was as eventful in the annals of the Presbyterian churches as it was in the history of the nation itself. In that year the New School, in response to demands from many quarters, definitely assumed full responsibility for its missionary work by establishing its own Permanent Committee of Home Missions, thus accepting the Old School's view of this once so bitter controversial issue. In the Old School Assembly that year was memorable for the adoption of some resolutions offered by Dr. Gardiner Spring, of New York, with a rider by Dr. Jonathan Edwards, of Philadelphia, declaring the obligation of the Church "to promote and perpetuate, so far as in us lies, the integrity of these United States, and to strengthen, uphold, and encourage the Federal Government in the exercise of all its functions under our noble Constitution," the Federal Government being "that central administration, which being at any time inaugurated according to the forms prescribed in the Constitution of the United States, is the visible representative of our national existence." Ostensibly in consequence of these Resolutions, but in reality, as the subsequent facts

clearly showed, on account of the political divisions of the country created by the Civil War, the southern presbyteries of the Old School during the summer and fall of 1861 renounced the authority of the General Assembly and organized the "Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America."

In the sphere of Protestantism, and especially in that of the Reformed churches, political separation has almost invariably carried with it ecclesiastical division. It was so in the period before us. But the converse of this proposition has likewise often been true. In 1863 the southern portions of the Old and the New School churches united, assuming, after the collapse of the Confederacy, the name of the "Presbyterian Church in the United States." The membership of this body was largely increased by the accessions of those parts of the Synods of Kentucky and Missouri which, in accordance with the "Declaration and Testimony," protested in 1867 against various actions of the Old School Assembly concerning the relations of Church and State, and "with reference to the conducting of missions in the Southern States, and with regard to the ministers, members, and churches in the seceded and border states."

And in the North, too, the influence of the war in bringing the Old and New Schools together was epoch-making. There was a deeper sense of the sacredness and value of national unity. Moreover, both bodies felt themselves put upon the defensive to justify their

separate existence. Both repeatedly expressed their loyalty to the Government, and throughout the nation, in public and private meetings, united their prayers for the common cause. The two greatest obstacles to union had been cleared away: the war made it no longer necessary for the Old School to pay so much deference to the principle of expediency in dealing with the problem of slavery; and in the New School, as we have seen, the idea of the denominational control of the missionary and benevolent work of the Church had won the victory, and had become the established practice. Then, too, the natural growth of the country led many on both sides to feel that only through a union of their forces could they rightly discharge the enlarged obligations, and improve the multiplied opportunities for service, in the *post-bellum* period.

III

THE REUNION

The first step in the formal negotiations that led to the reunion came from the Old School Assembly at Columbus, Ohio, in 1862. It recommended a "stated annual and friendly interchange of commissioners between the two Assemblies." The New School Assembly at its next meeting, in Philadelphia, in 1863, accepted the proposal "with heartfelt pleasure," telegraphed its action to the other body at Peoria, Illinois, and both sides, in accordance with the resolutions, immediately chose delegates. The next year, in connection with the Old School Assembly at Newark, New Jersey, a representative gathering, consisting of commissioners to the Assembly as well as others, drew up a paper in which, among other things, they expressed their "confident conviction that the time has come when measures should be initiated to promote the reunion of the two branches of the Presbyterian Church which were separated in 1838. . . . It is believed that the great majority in each branch 'sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures,' and approve of the same government and discipline. On this basis we may reunite, mutually regarding and treating the office bearers and church courts of each as coördinate elements in the reconstruction." That same year, 1864, at the opening of the New School Assembly at

Dayton, Ohio, the retiring moderator, Dr. Henry B. Smith, nobly urged the cause of reunion, and this sermon as well as the Newark Declaration made a strong and favorable impression throughout the North, an impression that was deepened by the practical object lesson given by the union of the two southern churches in the course of that year.

By a preconcerted action of members of both branches, the two Assemblies in 1886 met in St. Louis. The spirit of the place—far removed from the painful associations of the separation—found expression in gatherings for social worship, with a joint celebration of the Lord's Supper. Both Assemblies had received numerous memorials for action in favor of reunion. The Old School Assembly again took the initiative, expressing "its earnest desire for Reunion at the earliest time consistent with agreement in doctrine, order, and policy, on the basis of our common standards and the prevalence of mutual love and confidence," and proposing the appointment of a committee of nine ministers and six ruling elders from each body, "for the purpose of conferring in regard to the desirableness and practicability of reunion." The New School Assembly unanimously assented. The Joint Committee after two meetings reported to their respective bodies in 1867 a plan of reunion, "on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common standards; the Confession of Faith," to be "sincerely received and adopted 'as containing the system of doctrine taught

in the Holy Scriptures'; and its fair, historical sense, as it is accepted by the two bodies in opposition to Antinomianism and Fatalism on the one hand, and to Arminianism and Pelagianism on the other," to be regarded "as the sense in which it is adopted." According to Article 12 of these terms, the Assemblies were to publish the plan and to continue the Joint Committee through the next year to consider possible modifications. The New School Assembly unanimously adopted the whole report. The other body, in spite of opposition to some parts of the plan, expressed its conviction that "the finger of God" was pointing "toward an early and cordial reunion."

The next step in the process came from an outside but closely related movement. The Reformed Presbyterian (New School) General Synod of 1867 had passed a resolution calling a convention of all Presbyterian churches to consider the matter of a general reunion. Seven Presbyterian bodies sent their delegates—the total number was 263—to attend the convention in Philadelphia in November, 1867. A committee of one minister and elder from each of the churches represented brought in a unanimous report proposing, as the doctrinal basis for the reunion of all these bodies, the statement that "in the united Church the Westminster Confession shall be received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." To this Dr. Henry B. Smith, seeking to meet the objections offered by Dr. Charles

Hodge, and accepting the latter's very words, proposed the following amendment, which was carried: "It being understood that this Confession is received in its proper historical—that is, the Calvinistic or Reformed, sense." This amendment was quite acceptable to the New School delegates, who sustained it by a vote of 46 to 2. Still, when the Joint Committee of the two Assemblies met in March, 1868, there was considerable divergence as to what should be the precise terms of the doctrinal basis. In this serious exigency in the negotiations, Dr. P. D. Gurley, of Washington, D. C., successfully advocated an additional amendment: "It is also understood that various methods of viewing, stating, explaining, and illustrating the doctrines of the Confession, which do not impair the integrity of the Reformed or Calvinistic system, are to be freely allowed in the united Church, as they have hitherto been allowed in the separate Churches." Thus doubly amended, the Philadelphia article came before the two Assemblies of 1868. The Old School body, at Albany, presented considerable opposition to the two amendments, but as against a protest by the minority, Dr. William G. T. Shedd strongly defended the doctrinal soundness of the New School as set forth in the Auburn Declaration of 1837. In the New School some objected to Article 10, which acknowledged the right—not the duty—of presbyteries "to examine ministers applying for admission from other Presbyteries," each presbytery, however, being "left free to decide for

itself when it shall exercise the right." In the end both Assemblies adopted the report of the committee by large majorities—the New School minority waiving its objections in the final vote—and ordered the plan sent down to the presbyteries for their decision.

But toward the close of the session the Albany Assembly formally expressed its preference for the omission of both the Smith and the Gurley amendments, and by telegraph and through a committee of delegates informed the New School Assembly at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, of their action, stating that "if that Assembly shall concur in the amendment, it shall become of effect as the action of this Assembly also." But when the delegates arrived at Harrisburg, it was found that that Assembly no longer had a constitutional quorum for the reconsideration of the matter. When the vote of the presbyteries was taken, the New School judicatories voted their approval of the overture in the only form in which the plan came before them; but in the Old School Church many accepted the plan in the new form proposed in the closing days of the Albany Assembly, and heartily indorsed in the "Pittsburgh Circular" of 1868, signed by some thirty-one ministers and four elders, but never legally acted upon by the body at Harrisburg. In consequence of this confusion of counsels, the Plan of Reunion was approved by the New School branch but rejected by the other.

In 1869 the two Assemblies met in New York, the

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Old School in the Brick Church, the New School in the Church of the Covenant. Under the circumstances, the ardor of the latter body for reunion was naturally somewhat cooled. But the retiring moderator of this branch, Dr. J. F. Stearns, strongly urged the cause that had so nearly succeeded but was now in so precarious a condition. The atmosphere of the city, too, was favorable to the resumption of the enterprise, and joint prayer meetings of the two Assemblies gave new fervor to the project. A new Committee of Conference was appointed, and its report was finished in time for submission to both bodies. The New School again voted unanimous approval. The vote in the Old Assembly was 285 in favor, and 9 against the report. By the terms of the plan both Assemblies were to adjourn to Pittsburgh in November, 1869, thus giving the presbyteries time to vote on the overture, it being understood that if two thirds of them in both bodies approved the "Basis of Reunion," it was to be of binding force, and both Assemblies should make provision for the meeting of a General Assembly of the united Church as their legal successor. All the New School presbyteries, 113 in number, expressed their approval, all but 3 giving a unanimous vote, and each of these 3 showing but a single negative. In the Old School 13 of the presbyteries failed to respond; of the remaining 131, all but 3 voted approval. Accordingly the reunion was consummated at Pittsburgh, on Friday, November 12, 1869. Each Assembly de-

clared the basis of reunion to be of binding force, and then dissolved itself, requiring another Assembly to meet in the First Church of Philadelphia in May, 1870. There were memorable celebrations of the notable event in Pittsburgh, and at one of the popular gatherings a resolution was adopted to raise a thank offering of $5,000,000, and a committee was appointed to take charge of the campaign. The sum finally reported was $7,833,983.85.

IV

THE DOCTRINAL BASIS OF THE REUNION

The committee had wisely separated in its report the Plan of Reunion from the series of Concurrent Declarations pertaining to the adjustments necessary for the contemplated coming together of the two bodies. Only the former part of the terms was to be overtured to the presbyteries, the other portion being treated "not as articles of compact or covenant," but merely as "proper and equitable arrangements" to be approved by both Assemblies and to be carried out by the reunited Church.

The chief article, then, was that contained in the second of the six paragraphs containing the Plan of Reunion. It was the following:

"The reunion shall be effected on the doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis of our common Standards; the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be acknowledged to be the inspired Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice; the Confession of Faith shall continue to be sincerely received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States shall be approved as containing the principles and rules of our polity."

Thus the reunion was effected on the basis of the standards, "pure and simple," the basis originally pro-

posed by the first Joint Committee, and the only one that was ever seriously considered, all additions being interpretative and precautionary measures. According to the preamble of the Plan of Reunion, each branch recognized "the other as a sound and orthodox body according to the principles of the Confession common to both." Of interest in this connection was the reaffirmation by the Old School Assembly in New York, 1869, of the deliverance of the Assembly of the undivided Church in 1832: "That in receiving and adopting the Confession of Faith, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly of Divines are included, and do constitute an integral part of the Standards of this Church," a deliverance still valid for the whole Church. As a result of the reunion, therefore, the standards "pure and simple" were to continue to guarantee and at the same time to mark the limits of that reasonable freedom with respect to doctrinal issues which had characterized the Church from the time of the Adopting Act of 1729.

V

FIFTY YEARS OF THE REUNITED CHURCH

The hopes associated by most Presbyterians with the memorable reunion of these two ecclesiastical bodies have been more than justified by the achievements of the Church during the half century that has elapsed since that event. We can only glance at some of the salient features of this story, and select but a few of these for special consideration because of their more or less typical significance.

The first General Assembly of the united Church was held in Philadelphia, in May, 1870. It addressed itself patiently and successfully to the problems of reconstruction, following the terms set forth in the Concurrent Declarations approved the year before. The Church was reorganized into some 34 synods, 2 of them being on the foreign field, and the 259 presbyteries of the two churches were rearranged and reduced to 165. The consolidation of the respective Boards and Permanent Committees—those dealing with Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Education, Publication, Church Erection, Ministerial Relief, and Freedmen—was effected without much difficulty. The New School terminated its connection with the American Board, and later the united Church secured from this society, through a legal transfer, the administration of the Persian and Syrian Missions, and those in Gaboon (Africa), and those among four of our Indian

tribes. The difficult and delicate questions in regard to the theological seminaries were, for the time at least, satisfactorily disposed of, when they all, following the leadership of the directors of Union and Princeton, acceded to the plan adopted by the Assembly of 1870, whereby this body could supervise and control these institutions by exercising the right of a veto upon the election, suspension, and displacement of the professors, and likewise upon the elections made by the directors to fill vacancies in their own bodies.

The expansion of the Church in this period is impressively indicated by the fact that the number of ministers increased from 4238 in 1870 to 9918 in 1919; the number of churches from 4526 to 9805; the number of communicants from 446,561 to 1,603,033; the number of officers, teachers, and members of the Sunday schools from 448,857 to 1,356,295, a particularly gratifying and promising development. The figures representing the financial gains of the period are equally striking: the gifts for congregational expenses in 1870 were $6,416,165, and in 1919, $21,097,175; those for miscellaneous benevolences rose from $690,636 in 1870 to $5,248,595 in 1919; while those to the Boards of the Church increased in the same period from $1,300,686 to the grand total of $6,236,732. Taking the financial record for the period as a whole, it may be said that while the gifts have by no means kept pace with the vast increase in the wealth of the country, they clearly demonstrate the superiority of the

American voluntary system of ecclesiastic support as against the policy of governmental subsidies in lands that maintain established churches.

The progress of the Church may be further indicated by a reference to some of the activities of the organized agencies. In the year 1919, for instance, the 12 seminaries of the Church reported a total of 97 full professors, 5 associate professors, 33 instructors; an attendance of 595 students; total assets amounting to $13,670,797, with income from permanent funds and other sources aggregating $639,066. The relation of the Assembly to the seminaries became the subject of discussion in 1893, after the directors of Union Seminary in New York had terminated the compact of 1870 with the General Assembly, on the ground that their predecessors had exceeded their powers in entering into the arrangement. The Assembly of 1893 protested against this action, disclaimed all responsibility for the teaching of that institution, and directed the Board of Education to give aid only to theological students attending seminaries approved by the Church. The next year the Assembly adopted a report of a special committee recommending that all the seminaries be requested to amend their charters in order that their funds might be held in trust for the Church at large for the purpose of guaranteeing theological education according to its standards. But this solution of the problem did not commend itself to the existing boards of trustees in these institutions, and the legal obstacles in

the way of accepting the proposed change proved quite insurmountable.

The work of the Board of Home Missions has been fairly commensurate with the growing task of the Church. In 1919 this Board aided 1859 churches; employed 1243 missionaries; organized 103 Sunday schools, in addition to the 1502 it had under its supervision previously, with a total membership of 79,475; organized 19 churches, besides helping 40 to attain self-support; secured 4344 additions on confession of faith and 2520 on certificate; and expended for its current work $914,967.34. Owing largely to the work of this Board, synods have been organized in the West as follows: Kansas in 1869, Colorado in 1871, Nebraska in 1874, Columbia (now Oregon) in 1876, Texas in 1878, Utah in 1883, South and North Dakota in 1888, New Mexico in 1889, Washington in 1890, Montana in 1893, Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) in 1895, Idaho in 1909, and Arizona in 1912.

During the past year the Board of Foreign Missions has had under its direction 1364 foreign missionaries and 6806 native workers laboring in 16 different countries and 3831 cities of the non-Christian world; it served 4531 congregations with 177,776 communicants and 449,277 adherents; in its 2122 schools it trained 83,723 young people for Christian life and service; its 10 printing presses distributed in that year 102,149,396 pages of Christian literature, including the Bible; in its 189 hospitals and dispensaries its representatives

treated 787,618 patients—an achievement that gains in impressiveness when the extraordinary difficulties due to the World War, and the low cost of administering this vast enterprise are taken into the account. No Church in our country has a more enviable record for world-wide missionary effort.

In 1918 the new General Board of Education assumed the work conducted by the Board of Education, established in 1819, and the College Board, established in 1883. The Board was at work last year in 35 university centers, conducted extensive college visitations, gave scholarship aid to 373 students for the ministry—the usual number being greatly reduced by reason of the absence of many students in war service—13 candidates for medical missions, and 17 young women attending schools for the training of lay workers; it made grants of aid to, or helped in the securing of, endowments for some 43 colleges, which are organically connected with the Church, or by their charter requirements take at least two thirds of their boards of control from members of the Church, and in addition, 15 others whose history and associations justify the Church's coöperation with them.

The Board of Publication, organized in 1838, had its name changed to its present style in 1887, to correspond to its vastly extended work in and through the Sunday schools. In the last year it employed in its Missionary Department 166 workers in 187 presbyteries, organized 716 new Sunday schools, revived 410

others, held conferences with the officers and teachers of 2258 schools, conducted 524 Sunday-school institutes, organized 47 young people's societies, distributed 1,480,388 pages of religious literature, besides 13,830 copies of Bibles, Testaments, and other religious books, employed 25 colporteurs who distributed by sale or gift 6734 Bibles and Testaments, besides some 123,010 pages of tracts in at least 20 languages. In its Department of Religious Education it had an enrollment of 6395 pupils for teacher-training, conducted 14 summer conferences and 9 winter institutes. The Editorial Department has further developed its excellent Graded Lessons and steadily increased their sales, issued its many periodicals for the various Sunday-school departments, and published some 26 new books and booklets, making a total for the year of 2,715,102 copies, with 2,752,522 additional reprints.

The Board of Church Erection in the last fiscal year made appropriations to 97 churches and 48 manses, aggregating $364,231.61. Since its organization it has assisted in the erection of 11,587 churches and manses.

The Board of Ministerial Relief and Sustentation, combining since 1918 the former Boards of Relief and Sustentation, reported in 1919 assets and resources of over seven millions of dollars, and gave annuities to 680 ministers, 900 widows, 66 orphan families, and 69 commissioned lay missionaries, a total of $397,797.38 for the beneficiaries in the Relief Department; while the number of pensioners on the roll of the Sustenta-

tion Department was 168. The Board of Missions for Freedmen, organized in 1882, employs 644 workers, of whom 259 are ministers and 385 are laymen and women engaged in teaching, and it has under its care 440 missions and churches, with 26,884 communicants, 401 Sunday schools with 22,917 pupils, 480 teachers in day schools with 16,900 pupils.

The Board of Temperance, since the establishment of its work as a Permanent Committee in 1881, has done much to promote the cause of temperance reform, especially by coöperating with the forces that secured war-time prohibition and the ratification of the prohibition constitutional amendment, and is now engaged in consolidating the results won at home and in an extensive program for work in foreign lands. Its assets have increased from less than $200 in 1881 to over $100,000 in 1919.

The Permanent Committee on Evangelism, created in 1901, and the Permanent Committee on Men's Work, created in 1906, have had considerable success in performing the special tasks intrusted to them, and form a characteristic development of the social aspects and the practical methods of modern ecclesiastical enterprises. The former, especially, has done much to take away the sometimes justified reproach that while Presbyterians do well in settled communities, they pay a one-sided attention to the work of edification, leaving aggressive evangelism to other denominations. Few

signs in recent years have been more encouraging than the deepening and broadening interests of pastors and sessions in the task of soul-winning through local, denominational, and interdenominational evangelistic effort. The Permanent Committees on Vacancy and Supply, on Sabbath Observance, and on Christian Life and Work, recently organized, have shown their value as fixed agencies of the Church.

Special mention ought to be made of the extensive work of the women's societies of the Church. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized as early as 1870, and since that time five similar agencies have been established in various portions of the field. The noble work of the Woman's Board of Home Missions began in 1879, and this society now operates in seven fields, and expends annually about half a million dollars. These institutions, like many others in the local congregations, are but typical of that enlarged place which the women of our land—here far in advance of their sex in other countries—are filling in the activities of the Church, and in the application of the influence of organized Christianity upon society in general. In 1915 the General Assembly authorized the setting apart, in any congregation, of duly chosen deaconesses, their work to be supervised by the session; and it may be confidently hoped that the restoration of this office to its rightful place in the Church's order will add immensely to efficiency in the administration of the parish. At present there are three Presbyterian

training schools for such lay workers, attended by sixteen students under the care of the Board of Education.

But suggestive as the statistical facts given may be, they hardly furnish the point of view from which the vast and highly diversified work of the Church can be adequately surveyed and estimated. To do this one should have to consider in detail the labors of the countless workers in the seminaries, in the pastorates, in the Boards, on the mission fields—the incalculable ministries of the spoken and the written word of the numberless preachers, teachers, and authors, and above all, the influence of the hallowed lives of the devoted servants of Christ in the whole membership of the Church. But enough has been said to give some idea of the scope and the blessed results of the activities of the reunited Church.

It only remains to call attention to some salient facts that have a special significance in the history of this completed half century.

In 1880 the Church adopted a rule authorizing synods to become "delegated bodies." The next year action was taken whereby most synods were conformed to state boundaries. In 1884 and 1885 the "Book of Discipline" was revised in the interests of greater simplicity and consistency. In 1906 the General Assembly authorized the publication of the "Book of Common Worship," prepared by a committee for voluntary use in the churches, an act that has contributed not a little to the cultivation of a better liturgical knowledge and

interest on the part of pastors and people. In 1907 permanent judicial commissions for the several judicatories of the Church were established; the next year the Executive Commission of the General Assembly came into being; and in 1915 similar agencies for the presbyteries and synods were authorized for the more timely and effective handling of administrative policies and details during the intervals between the sessions of the bodies to which they are responsible.

In 1889, in answer to memorials from fifteen presbyteries requesting that steps be taken toward a revision of the Westminster Confession, the General Assembly overtured the presbyteries for an expression of their wishes in the matter. A considerable majority favored revision of one kind or another. A committee was appointed to formulate the changes desired, and the conclusions finally reached were submitted to the Assembly of 1892 in the form of twenty-eight overtures, which were sent to the presbyteries for final action. As not one of the overtures was sustained by the necessary vote, the whole matter was laid aside by the Assembly of 1893. But the project was revived in 1900, and in 1903 several important changes were adopted. Two "Declaratory Statements" were made: one safeguarding, against alleged fatalism, Chapter III of the Confession, concerning God's eternal decree; and the other explaining that Chapter X, Section 3, concerning "elect infants" "is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost." Slight changes were

made in the texts of three relatively unimportant articles in Chapters XVI, XXII, and XXV. And two new chapters, "Of the Holy Spirit" and "Of the Love of God and Missions," were added. In 1902 the Assembly unanimously adopted a "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith" in sixteen articles, to serve, not as a standard of doctrine, but rather as a helpful interpretation of the Confession.

The last decade of the nineteenth century was considerably disturbed, not only by this question of the revision of the Confession, but also by discussions pertaining to the nature of authority in religion, and especially that of Holy Scripture. The Assembly has since then repeatedly reaffirmed its historic position on these points.

In response to overtures from a number of presbyteries, the General Assembly of 1903 appointed a committee "to consider the whole subject of coöperation, confederation, and consolidation with other churches." Accordingly, this committee and a similar one appointed by the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church formulated a "Plan of Union," together with some "Concurrent Declarations," all of which were submitted to their respective Assemblies in 1904. The plan stated that "the union shall be effected on the doctrinal basis of the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as revised in 1903, and of its other doctrinal and ecclesiastical standards; and the Scriptures of the

Old and New Testaments shall be acknowledged as the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice." The Declarations stated that " in adopting the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as revised in 1903, as a Basis of Union, it is mutually recognized that such agreement now exists between the systems of doctrine contained in the Confessions of Faith, of the two churches, as to warrant this union—a union honoring alike to both. It is recognized also that the doctrinal deliverance contained in the Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith, adopted in 1902 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, ' for a better understanding of our doctrinal beliefs,' reveals a doctrinal agreement favorable to reunion." The General Assembly at Buffalo in 1904 approved the Plan of Union and sent it to the presbyteries for their adoption. The union was consummated in 1906, by the Cumberland Assembly at Decatur, Illinois, and by the other Assembly at Des Moines, Iowa. By this merger of the two bodies, some 1200 ministers, 1800 churches, and about 90,000 communicants were added to the Presbyterian Church, but the union was connected with prolonged and troublesome litigation. Another result of the union was the erection of two additional synods—Canadian and East Tennessee—consisting exclusively of colored ministers and congregations.

In 1875 the General Assembly entered into the

"Alliance of the Reformed Churches Throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian System," formed that year, in London, by a number of Presbyterian and Reformed churches of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the British colonies, and the continent of Europe. It now embraces about ninety denominations, with an aggregate of 35,000,000 adherents. It has given much encouragement to some of its smaller and weaker members, but the effort of Dr. Philip Schaff, one of its first and most influential sponsors, to secure through it the preparation of a sort of consensus of the faith of the Reformed churches, was not successful. It has, however, been useful in stimulating interdenominational and international comity among the churches. A similar organization, confined to the limits of our country, is that known as the "Council of the Reformed Churches in the United States Holding the Presbyterian System," established in 1907. This led in turn to the formation, in 1908, at Philadelphia, of the "Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America," containing representatives of some thirty denominations with about 17,000,000 communicants. These organizations are highly characteristic of the practical and social tendencies—likewise of the reduced zeal for denominational standards of doctrine—of American Christianity to-day. They are well fitted to bring the influence of the Christian churches as a whole to bear upon local and national questions in our social, industrial, moral, and political

life, as well as to prevent wasteful duplication of effort; but on the other hand, it may be questioned whether they will not retard some of those more desirable unions, now much canvassed, of closely related denominations belonging to the same family of churches.

VI

THE PROSPECT OF A GREATER PRESBYTERIANISM

In a real sense it may be said that American Presbyterianism is still in the colonial stage of its development; that it has only begun to take up the problems of the consolidation of its forces into an organic and homogeneous unity. But the likelihood grows from year to year that the process of combining Presbyterian churches in our country will make steady progress and bear a more abundant fruitage. We need not trace the long story of negotiations to this effect with the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the more recent attempts to coöperate and unite with the United Presbyterian and the Reformed Presbyterian churches. The situation alike in the foreign and in the home missionary field, and especially in the large cities, is a powerful stimulus toward organic union. But the lesson of history ought not to be forgotten, that the Presbyterian churches have been preëminently strong in proportion to their faithful devotion to pure evangelicalism, and that the critical and divisive spirit of Protestantism has always asserted itself through them, whenever there has been any question on the part of a conscientious minority that the confessional standards were being imperiled. Only when the agreement in doctrine and polity has been substantial and cordial, has unionism proved a blessing to the common cause. Nor

can one at this time prophesy what the many attempts at coöperation, federation, and even organic union with churches hitherto marked by theological opposition to one another will yield as a final precipitate for an enlarged and thoroughly self-consistent Presbyterianism.

Meanwhile, however, the Presbyterians of all denominational types may rejoice in the fact that their representative, republican polity is profoundly influencing most of the Protestant churches in our own and other lands; that the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America is by far the largest and wealthiest Presbyterian church in the world; and that to-day, as it has been throughout its history, it is influential, out of all proportion to its mere numbers, on account of the excellence of its ministry and the intelligence, thrift, culture, and general doctrinal soundness of its members. Its immense and diversified resources, its zealous spirit of evangelism, its generous recognition of the rights, the talents, and the abilities of women in Christian service, as well as of the needs and claims of the children and the youths of the Church, its capacity for organization and adaptation of its energies, and its well-equipped agencies and institutions give promise of increased expansion and usefulness, of continued and yet more splendid triumphs for evangelical religion. With all sympathy for legitimate attempts to promote interdenominational coöperation, federated efforts for the common purpose, and even organic unions that will not impair but only confirm its

historic witness to the truth, the Church will find, in loyalty to the best traditions of doctrine and polity during the half century since the reunion, the safe and sure path that leads to the largest efficiency and success in discharging the obligations and responsibilities of this new day of enlarged opportunities and privileges.